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New York

President: Mr. Gurirab ..... (Namibia)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

Address by the Prime Minister of the Independent State of **Samoa, His Excellency the Honourable Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi**

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Independent State of Samoa.

Mr. Malielegaoi, Prime Minister of the Independent State of Samoa, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of the Independent State of Samoa, His Excellency The Honorable Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Malielegaoi (Samoa): Mr. President, you assume the presidency at a historic moment and during the most challenging of times. Most warmly do we congratulate you. Samoa welcomes your leadership and pledges to you and to Namibia our fullest support.

This Assembly is an especially happy one for the Pacific: we now have in our midst three more South Pacific Forum States, the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga. Ancient in tradition and long in the business of political independence, each represents the variety and uniqueness of our region. They make more real the goal of universality, as I know their contribution will enrich the work of the Organization. In the name of my country, I extend to the Governments of Kiribati, Nauru and Tonga the warmest of greetings.

Let me, at the outset, pay a tribute to the stewardship of our Secretary-General and acknowledge the remarkable work of the United Nations — remarkable in terms of what is being done and achieved, at times against extreme and appalling odds.

The twentieth century has been marked by violence and tragedy throughout. Millions have died in countless conflicts worldwide. Millions more continue to perish from poverty and disease.

The Secretary-General's report on the work of the Organization (A/54/1) is thoughtful and challenging. Our world is one of trouble and insecurity. The range and complexity of the issues are worrying, in some respects seemingly overwhelming. Ordinary aspirations are not being matched by effective action. Far too many are embroiled in the brutalities of war. Fundamental human needs and rights are being denied.

I believe we should all pay much more attention to the reports of the Secretary-General. There is much there to confirm, and much to test our own perception of events and trends: directly, and in my view rightly, the

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Secretary-General has drawn attention to the place of sovereignty in the context of our contemporary common interest and asks how and by what means we are to defend that common interest. These questions go to the heart of the matter; the answers to them will define the role of the United Nations in the next millennium. There will, of course, be variance in perspectives. The experience of the United Nations itself in recent times does not yield satisfactory answers.

Yet there are challenges that need to be met, seriously and urgently. I would agree with the Secretary-General that it is critical to set clear criteria for international action and intervention. It is the United Nations, with its multilateral setting, that is best placed to determine such criteria; it is the United Nations that has been invested with the global ideals to deal with interventions, but, alas, there have been failures and there has been inability.

We should now look more deeply into the causes of those failures and lack of ability and in so doing we must balance competing rights and values. The very essence of the Organization is thus brought into focus: we need to ensure that the United Nations is able to function effectively in the new century, that we have a United Nations strengthened by commitment and reform. Above all, we need to bear in mind the essential connection between peace, development and human rights. We ignore any one to the fundamental detriment of all, although peace is the ultimate measure of our common interest, indeed, of our common future.

We think it is time to move to a more definitive phase in the current efforts to reform the Security Council. The issues are clear, and have been clear for some time: points of argument are now being repeated, or repackaged. Substantive changes are required: the current structure does not reflect the facts and realities of today; suffers from imbalance and inequities. Membership of the Security Council should be enlarged: we have said before that Japan deserves to be a permanent member. Provision for this should be made.

We appreciate the procedural changes made to the working of the Council, and we would encourage more of them: it would not be desirable to seek to resolve the unfairness of representation in one category without proper attention to the other. We share the view that Security Council reforms must necessarily be comprehensive and must address all aspects as a whole, including the power of veto. The veto is a central issue which must be resolved in the context of the current reforms. We think there is a proven case for the power of veto to be curtailed, and restricted to Chapter VII matters.

Samoa fully supports the ongoing efforts to modernize and strengthen the Organization. Reform measures must provide for the serious and early review of the regional groupings. The current arrangements are more representative of the past than the present. There is a need for reconfiguration to reflect natural geographies and to ensure equitable representation of subregions.

The anomaly of Australia and New Zealand being counted outside their geographical area should be corrected. They form a natural part of the South Pacific subregion of the Asian Group. Samoa adds its voice to the call made by Fiji and Papua New Guinea during this session for such regional reconfiguration. The matter should figure in the reform of the Organization and should be taken into account in reforming the structure and membership of the Security Council.

In the coming year, as we move towards an agreed approach to the Millennium Assembly, my Government believes that the world community should focus on major global challenges likely to confront humankind in the next century. We agree with the Secretary-General that, alongside war and conflicts, natural disasters are a major and priority global challenge. Natural disasters remain a most serious threat to human lives and national economies. As we have seen in recent times, natural disasters occur widely and indiscriminately, not stopping at any border. At this moment, we think especially of communities whose lives and property have been affected in Greece, Turkey, Taiwan, the United States and the Bahamas.

The world has experienced three times as many great natural disasters in the 1990s as in the 1960s, the year 1998 being the hottest year on record and the worst for weather-related natural disasters. Yet we learn with dismay from the Secretary-General's report that emergency aid funds have declined by 40 per cent in the past five years alone. For small island States such as the Bahamas, these "once-in-a-century" events are occurring with alarming frequency and severity. They are truly calamitous in effect. Hurricane Floyd was the fourth-strongest hurricane measured this century.

My own country has not been spared. We can only be thankful that our neighbours and traditional friends come so readily to our assistance at moments of disaster. Our Pacific neighbours, Australia, Japan and New Zealand, continue to be at the forefront of emergency and

rehabilitation efforts in disasters affecting our Pacific region. Countries far from the Pacific, such as those of the European Union, have also been generous. Even developing nations have not been hesitant in coming to our help. In the major disasters that have devastated our country, the People's Republic of China in particular, despite the severe and regular natural disasters it itself suffers, has been unstinting in helping our country in those difficult times.

China last week commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the Republic. Samoa joins other nations in congratulating the People's Republic of China in reaching this important milestone in its history.

The immediate practical needs are to determine what preventive action might be available, especially to the small and vulnerable. Advanced early-warning systems using satellite-derived data and Internet dissemination would be essential, as would be the need to train and improve capacities. Greater efforts to establish contingency planning and other preparedness measures for disaster-prone countries are required. In all these, active cooperation at all levels — national, regional and international — would be vital. Above all, we agree that we should maximize the lessons learned from the experience of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. It is critical for all countries, especially the most vulnerable, that this work be continued.

Samoa adds its voice to the expression of outrage at the violations in East Timor. These are violations of principles and of Government responsibilities, violations against the innocent and defenceless. The real lesson of East Timor is that a people's aspirations for freedom will triumph in the end. They cannot be suppressed for ever. Indeed, their balloted choice is abundantly clear. It is also the lesson of East Timor that the United Nations is best placed to safeguard rights and freedoms while ensuring order and security.

We are relieved that the multinational force is now in position and we appreciate the ready and effective response of key States, including our South Pacific neighbours, Australia and New Zealand. Samoa is especially grateful for the clear and committed leadership taken by Australia.

The violations to which I have referred reinforce the need for the world community to move as expeditiously as possible to complete the establishment of the International Criminal Court. Those responsible for these unacceptable acts of violence and crime must be brought to account. Samoa was able to contribute to the making of the Rome Statute. We are firmly committed to the early establishment of the Court, and we will continue to play a role in the work of the Preparatory Commission. We believe very firmly that the Court will provide an essential step in the name of human rights and the rule of law. To this end we should ensure prompt and widespread ratification of the Court's Statute.

Speaking now in Samoa's role as Chairman of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and on behalf of the forty-three members of our Alliance, allow me, Mr President, to thank you most sincerely for the time and effort you have devoted to the special session to ensure its success.

I also wish to express to all Member States, to the United Nations agencies and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, our very deep appreciation for their participation in the twenty-second special session in the past two days. The AOSIS countries are especially grateful for the expressions of commitment, understanding and support.

What we have heard provides additional motivation for us to make the Barbados Programme of Action one of real and sustained implementation. There are critical challenges that require attention. We are determined to turn those challenges into opportunities. With your support, we believe there is every prospect for achievement.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Independent State of Samoa for the statement he has just made.

The Hon. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister of Samoa, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Malaysia.

Mr. Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of Malaysia, His Excellency Mr. Mahathir Mohamad, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Mahathir (Malaysia): Mr. President, allow me first to congratulate you on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. It gives me great pleasure to see the international community honour both you and your country through your election to this high office. I am confident that, given your vast experience and diplomatic skills, you will be able to steer the proceedings of the Assembly to a successful conclusion.

I join other speakers in expressing our gratitude to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Didier Opertti, for the dedicated and effective manner in which he had guided the work of the General Assembly at the last session.

I would also like to take this opportunity to commend the Secretary-General for his great dedication to the Organization and the many contributions he has made in the service of the international community.

Malaysia would also like to join other Member States in welcoming, most warmly, the Republics of Kiribati and Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga as new Members of the United Nations. We look forward to working closely with them, particularly on issues of common interest to the Asia-Pacific region whence we come.

The twentieth century is coming to an end. Before we enter the twenty-first it is useful to review the events of this century so that we may learn from our experience and hopefully we will know how to conduct the affairs of the twenty-first.

This century saw the most destructive wars which destroyed billions of dollars of property and killed millions of people. It saw the most inhuman dictatorship in Germany where six million Jews were tortured and killed. It witnessed the first nuclear bombs that killed hundreds of thousands instantly and many more due to the after-effects.

When the greatest war in human history ended, this body, the United Nations, was founded. We thought there would be peace as the great Powers worked together in the United Nations. But that was not the case. Immediately the victors divided themselves into two camps and initiated the cold war. However, it was the threat of a hot war that kept the war cold. Each side built huge arsenals of nuclear and non-nuclear weapons and glared at the other across deep chasms of misunderstanding as they threateningly fingered their nuclear triggers.

For the colonies of European nations there was an up side. Fear of defections to the other side forced the two camps to relax their grips on their colonial territories. Countries gained independence, but their survival depended on their skills in playing the Western bloc against the Eastern bloc.

Unfortunately this choice to defect to the other side did not last. Suddenly the Communist side collapsed. Lured by the apparent wealth of the Western free-market liberal democracies, the Eastern bloc jettisoned their authoritarian centrally planned economies and adopted the liberal democratic free market overnight. They thought that since they would now have a system similar to that of the Western bloc they would get the friendship, cooperation and help from the Western countries.

They were naive enough to think that after 70 years of command economy and dictatorship they could overnight switch to the free market economy under the liberal democratic system. They soon found out that they knew nothing about how to make the system work and that they would get no help from the Western nations. Instead the Western nations saw in their incompetent floundering an opportunity to destroy the Eastern bloc, in particular the principal flag-bearer, forever.

Even as the inability to manage a free market resulted in galloping inflation, destruction of State enterprises and massive unemployment, the hedge funds and the Western financial institutions moved in to devalue the currencies and make debt defaulters of this once powerful enemy. Despite knowing that these people could not manage a free market liberal democracy at all, they were nevertheless urged and threatened into continuing anyhow. There was no going back for the Eastern bloc countries.

The destruction of the Eastern bloc was complete. It could never again militarily challenge the Western liberal democratic free marketeers. Now there would be only one choice for the world, and no defection would be possible for the countries of the world, big or small. With this the liberal democratic free market capitalists saw no more need to be gentle in spreading their systems or in profiting from them. No one would be allowed any other political or economic system except what was prescribed by the sole dominant bloc. The true ugliness of Western capitalism revealed itself, backed by the military might of capitalism's greatest proponent.

For the small countries, the demise of the Eastern bloc is a major disaster. Now they are exposed to pressures which they cannot resist, and very quickly they learned that the free marketeers intend to milk them dry. As for their politics, the instability of the liberal democratic system, which comes with a lack of understanding of its intricacies by the leaders as well as the people, meant that they would stay in a state of continuous turmoil, verging on anarchy.

A few countries apparently managed to grow and prosper, but not for long. The currency manipulators and short-term investors of the rich soon impoverished these countries through devaluing their currencies and share prices. Impoverished and politically unstable, they were forced to borrow from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Whether by design or through sheer lack of understanding, the economic regime imposed by the IMF further destroyed their economies. Soon their political freedom was also subverted, and many had to accept political direction by the IMF, or the loans would not be made available. For practical purposes, there was no more independence.

So for the small independent countries of the world, the future looks bleak. They are now being told that the world should be borderless, that capital, goods and services should flow freely between countries. There should be no discriminatory taxes to protect local industries or products. Local banks, industries and products must compete on the same footing as imported products, and their banks and industries must compete with foreign banks and industries set up in their countries. No conditions must be attached to foreign banks and businesses which want to set up operations in their countries. They must have national status like those given to local businesses. This way, it is said, a level playing field will be created and competition will be fair.

But can competition between giants and dwarfs be fair even if the playing field is level? The giant banks, corporations and industries from the rich countries, with huge local markets, can afford to lose money in a small foreign country when they make huge profits at home and elsewhere. The small businesses in the small countries will go bankrupt if they lose money repeatedly. In the end they will have to sell to the giant foreign companies or close down altogether. There will be no more big local companies; there will be only branches of large foreign companies who will indulge in transfer pricing and will repatriate most of their profit.

The efficient may produce better and cheaper goods, but if a country does not export its own products to earn foreign exchange it will not be able to pay for imports. Cheap high-quality goods mean nothing if you have no money to pay for them.

The markets of the poor countries may not be big, but impoverishing them would result in lost sales for the rich. That was what happened when the currency traders impoverished the countries they attacked. These countries could not buy the products of the rich; that is, the rich lost their markets, and world trade contracted. Free, unrestricted flow of goods and services across borders may be good for a while, but eventually it will destroy markets and result in contraction of world trade. The world would actually become poorer because of free trade.

After the last war, the confrontation between East and West led to most of the colonies being liberated and becoming independent countries. Being independent meant the right to govern their countries themselves. Unaccustomed to wielding so much power, many of these Governments failed. They became hopelessly indebted to the banks of the rich countries. Their people suffered from incompetent and frequently oppressive rule. But the principle that prevailed in the third quarter of the twentieth century was that no one should interfere in the internal affairs of a nation. That, in fact, was the essence of independence.

As long as the world was divided into Eastern and Western blocs, this principle was respected. But then a president decided that his country had a right and a duty to see that human rights were not abused anywhere in the world, irrespective of borders and the independence of nations. No one conferred this right on this crusading president. But small things like that were not going to stop him.

The claim to victory of the West in the Gulf War was regarded as a moral endorsement of the right of the powerful to interfere in any country's internal affairs. Soon, it was not just human rights. Systems of government and of the administration of justice and the financial and commercial systems came under scrutiny of the powerful countries. They insist that there must be only one way of administering a country, and that is the liberal democratic way. They insist that there can be only one economic system for the whole world, and that is the free market system. They insist that there must be openness in everything, transparency, separation of the

private from the public sectors, non-discrimination between ethnic groups, and no discrimination against foreigners in favour of nationals.

All these and more sound very good. They have apparently worked for the developed countries of the West, making them rich and powerful, giving their people high standards of living. But will they work for everyone? They seem to have forgotten that they took centuries to make their system work. Their transition from feudal oppressive rule was based in copious blood. Both rich and poor were massacred as reforms were forced by a succession of uncaring tyrants, many elected by the people.

Even today their system has not brought freedom and equity to large segments of their people, yet they insist that all the countries of the world, new or old, must immediately adopt the only system of government — their system, their liberal democratic system. The newly independent countries, which knew only the authoritarian system of government, cannot but fail. The former Communist countries in particular found themselves unable to cope with the destabilizing challenges directed at government authority in a liberal democracy.

But the new countries are not going to be allowed time to learn and operate the system. They must change now, immediately. If their countries are destabilized, if their people suffer, if they regress economically, that is irrelevant. The important thing is that they must democratize and liberalize. If they fail to do so, they will be forced to do so through arm-twisting, trade sanctions and military action, if necessary.

That these measures are more oppressive than those of the disapproved regimes and systems does not matter. The adoption of the approved system would destabilize the countries further and cause further suffering. All this does not matter, because the most important thing is the adoption of the system, not the benefit to be derived from it.

It is the same with economic management. There must be liberalization and deregulation. The Government should not help the business sector, should not give it any protection. If businesses are attacked by outside forces, fairly or unfairly, and they lose, then let them die. They must be inefficient if they lose, and the world has no time or sympathy for inefficient losers.

And so giant currency traders, their funds leveraged one hundred times or more, are pitted against central banks with limited reserves and without leveraging rights. The economies of whole countries and regions are destroyed, but the cries for protection by these countries are ignored. The fields are level, and the free movement of capital is a part of the secret free trade. Everyone must accept whatever happens because it is free trade. All the currency traders are doing is to discipline Governments so that they conform to the system and do away with their bad old system.

In the financial crisis, Governments may not help businesses to recover. To do that means a bail-out of cronies. Let them die; let there be blood. Only then will Governments be considered serious in wanting to reform their systems, to adopt best practices, world standards and the only proper way to administer the economy. If the Government becomes bankrupt in trying to do this, that is all right. The important thing is to do things correctly, even if the country is destroyed, the people starve to death, anarchy reigns and the Government overthrown.

There is a touching concern on the part of the West over human rights. But the definition of human rights seems limited to an individual's right of dissent against the Government. Millions of people in a country will be made to suffer through sanctions and even bombings in order that a few dissenters may enjoy their rights of dissent. Apparently the rest of the population, hundreds of millions of them sometimes, have no rights. Their rights are not considered human rights. Thus depriving millions of the right to work as a result of currency trading is not considered as a violation of human rights. In the Western perception only individuals have rights; the masses do not.

The concern over child labour and sweatshop factories is expressive of a sense of caring. Unfortunately the concern is shown only when the products of child labour and sweatshops compete successfully with the products of highly paid, high-living four-day-a-week workers in the developed countries.

Child labour and sweatshops are not something which anyone would defend, but consider the extreme poverty of the people in some countries. They have no capital, no technology or expertise, no markets at home, no Harvard-trained managers. All they have is low-cost labour. For the workers, the tiny wages that they earn are far better than starvation and death. If we really care, then invest and pay high wages. The sweatshops will disappear and adults will earn enough to feed their

children. Forcing them to stop child labour and sweatshops will only cause more suffering for their people. Telling them to stop producing children is not a solution either. We know that the poor have a higher birth rate than the rich. To stop the population explosion which the West is worried about, enrich these people. Closing their sweatshops and stopping their children from working will only impoverish them further and cause them to have more children.

With the end of the East-West confrontation, conflicts have increased instead of decreased. The Palestinian problem is still not resolved, but the sanctions against and the bombing of Iraq, the sanctions against Libya, the conflicts resulting from the break-up of the Soviet Union, and the stirring up of unrest and rebellions, or near-rebellions, by open support for insurrection go on. Before, it was the Communists who stirred up rebellion everywhere, including in Malaysia. Now we have the liberal democrats doing exactly the same in the same manner, complete with supply of arms. Whether it is a communist or a liberal democratic insurrection, the people suffer not one bit less.

The United Nations seems helpless. Indeed, it is often bypassed by the big and the powerful. Now groupings of powerful nations or even one nation by itself seem to decide when to step in and when to step out. While they like to wield power, they are inordinately unwilling to pay the price. "Tele-wars" are conducted using high technology, such as the so-called pinpoint bombings, in order to avoid body bags coming home. This unwillingness to face the enemy often results in the unnecessary killing of innocent people and the destruction of the wrong targets.

Unfortunately, no one should expect any change for as long as the United Nations belongs to the permanent five. The structure of the United Nations will continue to reflect the glorious victory of these nations 50 years ago. For the small countries, yearly speeches and various anniversary speeches will be allowed. Occasionally there will be membership in the Security Council. But despite the fact that at least three of the permanent five are vociferous advocates of democracy, there will be no democracy in the United Nations. The only saving grace is the agencies and their good work.

Unfortunately, some in the United Nations have rather unusual principles. Normally a neutral or unbiased person would be chosen to study, report on and give an opinion or pass judgment on something. But the United Nations chose a person well-known for his virulent attacks against the Malaysian judiciary to report on that institution. The United Nations then conferred on him total immunity with respect to the laws of his country without reference to or consent by the country. This immunity apparently extends beyond his task of reporting his findings to the United Nations. He may publish his opinions and defame people and the subject of his study anywhere and everywhere. Is there no limit to a United Nations Commissioner's or Rapporteur's immunity?

We are told that Governments must not interfere with the judiciary. Yet in this case the Government is expected to instruct the judiciary not to act against this United Nations Commissioner for breaking the laws of the country. I am not blaming the Secretary-General for this. It is the peculiar system and principles which guide the choice of the United Nations Commissioner or Rapporteur that I find unacceptable. Nor do I think it proper to hint at dire consequences for the Malaysian nation if this man is not freed from court action for open contempt and defamation. There is something not right here which the United Nations needs to look into.

But small countries lack a public forum to air their views freely. The Western media distorts everything that they say or do. Again we are expected to give immunity to western journalists; they may break our laws, but no legal action may be taken against them. I would like to point out that in Malaysia not even the King and the hereditary Sultans are above the law.

This then is the scenario in the last quarter of the twentieth century. We will carry this baggage into the twenty-first century and the new millennium. For the poor and the weak, for the aspiring tigers and dragons of Asia, the twenty-first century does not look very promising. Everything will continue to be cooked in the West. Just as communism and socialism came from the West, liberal democracy, globalization, a borderless world, deregulation, unfettered free flows of capital and their flights to quality, the disciplining of Governments by the market and by currency traders, and a host of other ideas all come from the West. And what is from the West is universal. Other values and cultures are superfluous and unnecessary. If they remain, there will be a clash of civilizations. To avoid this clash there should be only one civilization in the world. Everything should be standardized according to Western best practices. They may change only if the West changes. Thus the globalized world will be totally uniform. Variety is equal to intransigence and must therefore be eliminated.

Malaysia has just gone through a very traumatic experience. In a matter of weeks, 42 years of hard work to develop the country was destroyed, in particular the affirmative action to reduce the enmity between races in Malaysia.

We have devised our own formula for recovery. With the blessings of Allah, we have turned around and are on the road to recovery. But we are being pressured to abandon our currency control. We do not understand why. It has done us a lot of good. It has done no harm to anybody except a few thousand rich currency manipulators. Foreigners doing real business in our country have profited from the so-called controls. But we are still being urged to conform to an international financial system which has enabled the unscrupulous to destroy the wealth of many nations.

No serious attempt is being made to change the international financial system. So far there is only talk about intentions. But the threat of financial, economic and political destabilization remains.

Malaysia wishes only to be allowed to manage things in its own way, in the interests of its own people. We will not harm others. We are not turning our backs on the world. We have always cooperated with the rest of the world, in particular with the United Nations. We will continue to do our bit for world peace. Just as we accept criticism, warranted and unwarranted, we hope others will also tolerate our criticism of them. Free speech would be meaningless if criticism could be directed only at the poor and the weak and never at the rich and powerful. In criticizing others, we are only exercising our right to freedom of expression.

We are not too enchanted by the prospects we foresee for the next century. But I can assure the Assembly that we will be a responsible nation, friendly towards all who are friendly towards us and harbouring no bad intentions towards anyone.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Malaysia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia, His Excellency The Honourable Alexander Downer.

Mr. Downer (Australia): May I begin by adding my congratulations to those of my colleagues on your election, Sir, as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. You are no stranger to these halls — you were here first as an observer and later as a representative. You bring a wealth of experience to your position, and we are pleased to see Namibia taking leadership roles in both the General Assembly and the Security Council.

Before I move to the main substance of my remarks today, I want to take this opportunity to mention two matters.

First, I welcome the three new members of the United Nations: Kiribati, Nauru and Tonga. Having worked closely with these three countries in our own Asia-Pacific community, it is a particular pleasure for me, as the Foreign Minister of Australia, now to have the opportunity to take that cooperation into this larger family of nations.

The second matter is one that seized the attention of the entire Australian population earlier this year: the fate of two CARE Australia workers, Steve Pratt and Peter Wallace, who were imprisoned by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Thanks in no small measure to the support of the international community, Steve and Peter were released from prison on 1 September. The efforts of Secretary-General Kofi Annan, the High Commissioner for Refugees, Mrs. Ogata and the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mrs. Robinson, and the continued support of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, were invaluable in gaining the men's release.

I would also like to thank President Ahtisaari of Finland, the Greek Government, Nelson Mandela, Pope John Paul and the many other individuals who generously lent their support to this cause. The international community's cooperation in this case demonstrates the strong commitment we share to protecting our humanitarian workers from persecution, and to ensuring their capacity to carry out their important work in safety. Australia will continue to support international efforts to secure the release of Branko Jelen, a Yugoslav national and an employee of CARE Australia, who continues to serve time in a Yugoslav prison.

You, Mr. President, take up your responsibilities at a most auspicious time, as the nations of the world enter a new millennium. As they do so, it is appropriate for us

to reflect on the past and the future of the United Nations, what it has achieved and what tasks remain unfulfilled. Of course, the various aspects of this subject are as numerous and diverse as the operations of the United Nations itself, which has evolved from a modest operation in the early days after the end of the Second World War to become an Organization that touches on just about every facet of human existence.

Today I want to concentrate on just two matters. The first is perhaps the most fundamental task before this Organization: the maintenance of global peace and security through humanitarian intervention. This is a subject that has been at the centre of my own thinking, especially over recent weeks because of the role Australia has played in the resolution of the conflict in East Timor. I believe that the activities of the United Nations in that Territory stand as an example of the kind of work to which this Organization can really add value.

The other matter — the reform of the United Nations — is on the face of it a rather prosaic matter. But, in truth, reform is the key to every single function of this Organization, for without it we cannot hope to equip the United Nations to face the demands of our ever-changing international environment. The United Nations must change and adapt, or become increasingly irrelevant.

I turn now to the question of the future of East Timor. It is now just over a week since the first elements of the International Force in East Timor (INTERFET) began arriving in Dili to commence the task set for it under Security Council resolution 1264 (1999) of 15 September to restore peace and security in East Timor, to protect and support the United Nations Mission in East Timor in carrying out its tasks and, within force capabilities, to facilitate humanitarian assistance programmes.

I am pleased to report that INTERFET's deployment has been smooth and peaceful, and that elements of the force are now spreading across the territory of East Timor. It has begun the vital work of bringing peace back to the troubled island, and of assisting in creating the right climate for the provision of the food, shelter and medical assistance that the East Timorese desperately require. This is the latest chapter in the long association of the United Nations with East Timor, an association that has lasted for more than a quarter of a century. The process that has brought us here has been long and difficult, but at last we may be approaching a peaceful resolution of the tragedy that has beset the East Timorese people for so long.

The fact that we have arrived at this point owes much to President Habibie of Indonesia. It was President Habibie who led his country down the path of democracy after the departure of former President Soeharto. Under President Habibie's guidance, Indonesia held its first democratic elections in more than four decades, and it now awaits the election of its next President. It was also President Habibie who decided to allow the people of East Timor to choose between greater autonomy within Indonesia and independence. Those were momentous decisions — decisions that reflect the massive strides that Indonesian society has made in just a few short months. Australia stood by the Indonesian people as they began their transition to democracy, and we will continue to do so in the years ahead.

Regardless of the problems that have beset the transition process in East Timor, President Habibie and his administration deserve full credit for actually initiating that process. I also want to make special mention of the role played by the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, in seeking a peaceful resolution of East Timor's status.

The conclusion on 5 May this year of the tripartite Agreement among Portugal, Indonesia and the United Nations owed much to the hard work and perseverance of the Secretary-General, who helped guide the parties towards a settlement that provided for a credible and orderly ballot on East Timor's future. In doing so, he maintained the honourable tradition of his predecessors as Secretary-General, who since 1983 had been working with Portugal and Indonesia towards a comprehensive and just solution to the region's difficulties.

It would be remiss of me if I did not also mention the sterling work done both before and after the conclusion of the Agreement by the Secretary-General's Personal Representative, Ambassador Jamsheed Marker, and his deputy, Francesc Vendrell. The work of those two men was crucial to the successful outcome of the negotiations and to the holding of the ballot in East Timor.

Of course, the conclusion of the tripartite Agreement was just the beginning of the process to allow the East Timorese to decide their own fate. With the establishment by the Security Council on 11 June of the United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET), the practical work of holding the popular consultation got under way. Under the leadership of Ian Martin, UNAMET began the difficult and often dangerous task of organizing a vote in only 12 short weeks. Thanks to the

enthusiasm and application of Ian Martin and his team, that task was accomplished with results that few could have ever dreamed of. The fact that more than 450,000 people were able to register to vote and that 98.6 per cent of them actually did so is a remarkable tribute to the courage and the thirst for democracy of the East Timorese people.

But it is also a tribute to the effectiveness of UNAMET and its staff, and a fine example of how effective the United Nations can be in situations of conflict and transition. The work done by UNAMET staff in the days before the ballot and in the tragic days following it deserves our highest praise. Unarmed, in a tense and emotionally charged atmosphere, they carried out their duties magnificently. In particular, the military liaison and civilian police components of UNAMET, led respectively by Brigadier General Rezaqul Haider of Bangladesh and Commissioner Alan Mills of Australia, played crucial roles as the interface between UNAMET and the Indonesian police and military authorities.

UNAMET carried out its work at great risk to the staff involved, and, tragically, several locally engaged employees paid for their dedication with their lives. That fact is a stark reminder of the great personal cost that is often associated with United Nations operations, and a reminder to us all of the need to make the security and personal safety of United Nations staff one of our most urgent priorities. The United Nations must rely on its staff to carry out its various mandates. A threat to the person of a United Nations staff member must be treated as a threat against the United Nations itself.

It is a matter of unfortunate record that the upsurge of violence in East Timor after the ballot on 30 August swept up not just United Nations staff members, but hundreds and maybe thousands of East Timorese. The world has witnessed the most horrible cruelty visited on the island's population by people who were unwilling to accept the outcome of the vote. To the great credit again of President Habibie, he sought military assistance through the Security Council. In response, the Security Council delivered a strong resolution and a positive mandate for peacekeeping operations, a mandate that will ensure that the will of the East Timorese people, as expressed in the 30 August vote, will be carried out.

We in Australia have been very heartened by the positive international response to the call for military forces to make up the international force in East Timor and its successor peacekeeping force. As I have mentioned, the international forces under the command of Major-General Peter Cosgrove, have begun to restore order in East Timor. There are currently some 3,200 personnel on the ground, drawn from a range of countries, with strong representation from our own Asia-Pacific region. The large number of countries participating in the force, and their wide geographical representation, is evidence of the widespread international determination to see a peaceful and orderly transition in East Timor's status.

I am also very pleased to note that UNAMET personnel have now returned to the island, and will be able to continue their important work.

In discussing the activities of the United Nations in East Timor, I must also mention the humanitarian work done by United Nations agencies. Mrs. Sadako Ogata, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, has travelled to West Timor to examine the plight of East Timorese refugees in that territory, and Australia fully supports her efforts.

Australia is also the staging point for humanitarian assistance operations being carried out by agencies such as the World Food Programme and the United Nations Children's Fund. Additional relief efforts are also planned by the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Australia has already pledged $7 million towards the humanitarian efforts of United Nations agencies and other organizations.

The United Nations is also seeking to address the human rights violations that have been widespread in East Timor. Security Council resolution 1264 (1999) called on those responsible for violence in East Timor to be brought to justice. Australia supports efforts by the Indonesian Government and the United Nations to bring to account those responsible for the grievous acts of criminal violence visited upon the East Timorese people, and will offer all appropriate assistance in this regard.

More generally, there is now an urgent need to move as soon as possible to the third phase of the United Nations plan for East Timor. This will require all parties, most especially Indonesia and Portugal, to work closely with the Secretariat. Australia will do what it can to assist in this process, which will build the foundation for the transition in the territory's status.

In its activities in East Timor, the United Nations has demonstrated some of its fundamental strengths as an organization. It is helping to bring about the resolution of

an international problem that had been festering for a quarter of a century. It provided the infrastructure that allowed a free and fair expression of the will of the East Timorese people. And when the security situation could not be controlled, it facilitated the creation of an international force to put the transition process back on track and end gross violations of human rights.

I have been struck by the deep historical resonances of this process, for when the United Nations was established at the end of the Second World War, part of its rationale as an organization was to have been the impartial and objective resolution of international problems, free of the old cycles of retribution through resort to aggression. The ancient resort to armed force and the notion that might was right were to have been overturned, and in their place the community of nations was to cooperate to settle international disputes and solve global problems. The world, having won a victory over nazism, was determined that similar evils would never again prevail.

Well, we have seen plenty of occasions in the past 50 years where practice has not measured up to the ideals. But every now and then, the process works, and I believe that many elements of the work of the United Nations in East Timor are evidence of that. Of course, that is not to say that the process cannot be improved; of course it can. But if we can identify and build upon the positive elements of our East Timor experience, I believe that we can not only improve the situation of the people of that territory, but may also be able to provide a speedier and more thorough resolution of other international crises in the future.

We need also to draw lessons from the negative aspects of events in East Timor. Through our efforts there, we have shown what the United Nations can do well. Let us build on that effectiveness, and strive for an organization that is even more relevant to global peace and security in the next millennium.

I now turn to another aspect of increased effectiveness: the question of United Nations reform. In a recent report on preparations for the Millennium Assembly and the millennium summit, the Secretary-General described the United Nations as a unique institution. No one could disagree that the contribution of the United Nations to the pursuit of peace and security, to the economic and social advancement of all peoples and to the promotion of human rights over the last 50 years or so has been not just of enormous value, but also truly unique in world history.

The twenty-first century, however, will bring with it new challenges and, I hope, new opportunities.

Under the direction of Kofi Annan, this Organization has begun the important and necessary steps to equip itself to face these challenges through genuine administrative and management reform. This has included promising changes in financial and personnel practices, significant economies, improving coordination between United Nations bodies, significant rationalization of Secretariat structures and more efficient use of technology. Such reforms make the work of the United Nations more efficient and provide real savings for the Organization. Those savings can then be used for other programmes that benefit all Member States, but particularly the developing Members of the United Nations.

The challenge for the United Nations — and, let us all recognize its Member States — is to ensure that this momentum is sustained and taken forward. A former Australian Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies, said over 40 years ago that "when we talk of the United Nations, we should remember what it is in fact, and not be led off by dreams of what we would like it to be in another kind of world."

We need to accept that the United Nations exists in a real world and be realistic about what it can achieve. We need to ensure that the Organization's structures and processes better reflect the realities of the twenty-first century. We need an expanded, more representative and more transparent Security Council, and an electoral group system which reflects the geo-political and economic realities of today rather than the early nineteen sixties. To achieve real reforms on these and other subjects, Member States must work together in a sustained and cooperative manner. And they must also demonstrate their commitment to the Organization by paying their contributions on time and in full.

Reform of the United Nations means building a stronger and more effective Organization that can deliver on its commitments to the world's people. It means less waste and more practical activities. It means developing an Organization that is equipped to meet whatever challenges the new century may bring.
Ultimately, it means creating a United Nations that can maintain its relevance when many national and international institutions are falling by the wayside, made obsolete by the rapid pace of change.

I want to conclude my remarks with a call for the United Nations to concentrate on building on its strengths. I have mentioned the need to stick with a programme of thorough and fundamental reform, for that is a basic prerequisite for the continued effectiveness of the Organization. But I have also mentioned the United Nations work in East Timor as an example of how the Organization can, and does, make a real difference in the resolution of complex and challenging foreign policy and humanitarian problems. Not only was the United Nations able to administer a ballot in circumstances in which many observers thought the task impossible, but it was also able to provide for the insertion of a peacekeeping force when law and order broke down. Those who wished to exterminate an entire community were foiled.

Those are great strengths. But we need to be able to consolidate them to make the United Nations a more effective Organization. We must, for example, be able to ensure that the United Nations can intervene quickly when rapidly deteriorating conditions threaten entire nations. That was the lesson of Rwanda. I was struck by the comments made by the Secretary-General on this subject when he addressed the Assembly last week. As the Secretary-General suggests, changing international circumstances — including the spread of notions of individual rights and the idea that the international community has a responsibility to respond effectively to humanitarian crises — are challenging traditional notions of national sovereignty. The United Nations needs to focus on these challenges and begin the process of defining when and how the Organization should act in the face of humanitarian crises.

It may be an old cliché to say that the world is growing ever smaller, but it is true just the same. In days gone by, the nations of the world may have been forgiven if they acted too slowly in the face of a humanitarian crisis. Tales of atrocities, famine and natural disaster took weeks or months to filter out from the more inaccessible areas of the globe. Today, those same stories are likely to be on television screens within hours, or even minutes.

In the face of such indisputable evidence, Governments will be forced to act. Those that resist will have to face a domestic and international audience as well informed as they. That is the kind of environment in which the United Nations will increasingly have to function, where the results of inaction will be seen instantly and the consequences of failure subject to instant and very telling scrutiny.

Some will be concerned about interference in national sovereignty, and obviously that is an important and legitimate concern. Others will say that the greater principle is that of natural human solidarity. But whatever view is correct, this environment is a fact we now have to deal with, whether we like it or whether we don't. When we all gather here in New York each year, it is easy to get caught up in the daily business of the United Nations, in the resolutions, the committee meetings, the briefings and the caucusing.

How often do we stop, and remind ourselves of the purposes for which we meet? If we genuinely wish to uphold the Charter, if we really do want to maintain international peace and security, help develop our economic and social strengths and promote respect for human rights and fundamental reforms, surely we can start by upholding the most basic right of all, that of life.

In the face of acts of genocide, or of human rights abuses on a horrendous scale, the nations of the world must act. I am a firm realist when it comes to foreign policy, but am also a great believer in the value of idealism. More than 50 years ago, our predecessors created the United Nations in the firm hope that there could be a new international order to replace the old, a spirit of cooperative international action that could avoid the competition and aggression that caused two world wars.

As we approach the end of this century, it is true that the United Nations has not lived up to all the hopes of its founders. But the great promise of the Organization remains. The United Nations response to developments in East Timor has shown just what positive action on the part of this Organization can accomplish. We know the great things this body can achieve. Let us all try to build on those achievements, so that we may create an Organization that can truly address the most pressing problems of the international community. We can build an active and practical United Nations to meet both the aspirations of its Member nations and, also, the legitimate needs of all humanity.

Mr. President: I next give the floor to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Israel, His Excellency Mr. David Levy.

Mr. Levy: (Israel) (*spoke in Hebrew; English text furnished by the delegation*): The fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations takes place at a time marking humanity's crossing into the next

millennium. It emerges as a link in the long chain of tumultuous events that have reshaped the map of the family of nations.

The United Nations was born against the backdrop of the destruction and desolation of the Second World War, the most bitter, deadly and inhumane war known to mankind. The descent of the Nazi regime to the depths of evil was like an eclipse in the history of civilization and will be recalled in history as a nightmare in which man created the devil, who wreaked devastation, destruction, terror and annihilation upon the world. The stand taken by the Allied forces against the Nazi monster, and the creation of the United Nations in April 1945, on the verge of the defeat of the forces of destruction, was an act that marked the return of humanity to its senses, to salvage the future of mankind.

In this month when we mark 60 years since the outbreak of the most horrible of wars, we are strengthened more than ever in our sense of hope and confidence in the necessity of the United Nations and of its activities throughout the world. The various agencies of the United Nations work to enhance world health and tend the sick; to supply the needy with food and nourishment; to build bridges between cultures; to promote education and overcome ignorance; to instil hope into the lives of refugees and displaced persons; and to assist the victims of disasters, whether natural or man-made.

The soldiers of the United Nations forces are the true peacekeepers of our age. In its corps are soldiers from all the nations of the world. At times they risk their lives in areas riddled with conflict and violence around the world, whether their United Nations mandate is to make peace or to be observers that safeguard the peace. These distinctions, important as they may be to the policy makers and shapers of international relations, have no meaning to the individual United Nations soldier, posted far from his country, who brings hope and tranquillity to places fraught with tragedy, suffering and violence.

After many centuries of violence and war, of enslavement and destructiveness in the name of murderous ideologies, after decades of cold war and polarized world alliances of the East and the West, the human race is now making great strides down the paths of peace and reconciliation. Before our very eyes, a process is enveloping the world, signalling hope for the future. Mankind is adopting a new path, the path of the prophet Isaiah, who as far back as 2,600 years ago prophesied that the day would come when

> "they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." *(The Holy Bible, Isaiah 2:4)*

This prophecy — which has been adopted by the United Nations as a source of hope, as the symbol of the victory of the good in human beings over evil — should serve today more than ever as a beacon and a path for all who cherish peace around the world and for their representatives gathered here today.

The world has become more open. Satellites, the Internet and telecommunications networks shorten geographical and cultural distances. The political and ideological blocs of the past have disintegrated, and the walls of animosity have fallen along with the tyrants and dictators who built them. They are being replaced by new blocs, some of which are in the process of being created where development and prosperity reign. I hope and believe that these beneficial transformations will also occur in the Middle East.

In our region, too, the light of hope has been rekindled. We are now in the midst of a political process, the objective of which is to reach peace between States and reconciliation between peoples. Israel aspires to reach a comprehensive peace with its neighbours, a peace of harmony. Israel will not be satisfied with a merely political or strategic peace. In our eyes, the absence of war is not the peace we aspire to achieve.

May I be allowed to emphasize once again that peace means a culture of peace: peace means no more threats of violence, whether implied or categorical; peace entails the end of boycotts, the end of contempt and defamation, the end of incitement and confrontation... peace is also a language of peace: it is the way leaders address their nations, teachers teach their students and religious leaders inspire their followers.

At a time when various kinds of religious extremism are rearing their heads and eroding human wisdom and human freedom, it is essential that inter-faith dialogue be strengthened and that the religions be manifested in their enlightened forms, which sanctify tolerance and coexistence.

On the way to achieving peace in our region, we often find ourselves confronted with contradictory realities. Parallel to the political process, our negotiating partners are conducting a constant political war against

Israel in various international forums, including from the podium of this Assembly. This dualism is inconsistent with the peace process and is intolerable, as are the extreme decisions taken by the Arab League against Israel. These decisions are not in keeping with the spirit of peace, as expressed in the Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum.

We hoped for and expected a different atmosphere, one that would complement the impetus initiated by the new Government in Israel. We have been saddened to witness events that undermine the essence of peace. These events can be defined only as anti-peace resolutions.

Engaging in a peace process, on the one hand, and maintaining anti-Israel declarations and resolutions, on the other, raises some serious concerns about our negotiating partners and their concept of peace. Is it a peace of normalization with open borders, or is it only one of temporary initial recognition? Will our relations with the Gulf and Maghreb countries, such as Morocco, Tunisia, Mauritania, Qatar and Oman, be allowed to expand and develop? Or will these relations remain hostage to mood swings after each and every difficulty in the negotiations or whenever there is disagreement? Continued doubts about these cardinal questions cannot be tolerated in the light of the heavy price and grave risks that Israel is taking upon itself in this process.

Three weeks ago, on 4 September, Israel and the Palestinian Authority signed the Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum, which for the first time creates a direct, chronological, political and conceptual link between the Interim Agreements and the final status agreement. On 13 September, the final status talks were renewed between Israelis and Palestinians.

We are determined to reach a framework agreement that will form the basis of the final status agreement by February 2000, as stated and agreed upon in the Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum. In this framework we will select the issues and set an agenda for the final status agreement. The topics at hand are known, as are the differing vantage points and positions of each side. The differences can be resolved only by direct negotiations.

Regarding the final status, I wish to affirm from this podium that when we refer to political separation as one of the prime concepts of the permanent settlement, we are also saying that, for the benefit of both sides, we should not necessarily sever ties that are vital to coexistence in the various spheres of living.

From Israel's perspective, there is no competition and never has been any between the different negotiating tracks. Israel also aspires to reach peace with Syria, our neighbour to the north. This is, after all, in the higher common interests of both Israel and Syria. However, along with these common interests, the following point must be made clear: A democratic country like Israel cannot accept a precondition to beginning the talks that requires a prior acceptance of the final outcome as dictated by the extreme and dogged formulas of the opposing side.

We must maintain the momentum of good will so that we can face our children, Syrian and Israeli alike, with a clear conscience and say to them in all honesty: We tried everything and did our utmost. I call upon the leaders of Syria, in view of what we have gone through together, to cease hesitating. It is time to talk. Meetings and discussion are not political sacrifices — they are basic necessities.

On the road to a comprehensive peace, we wish to see Lebanon join the camp of peacemakers. The anomaly which has developed in its territory must come to an end. We have never had nor do we have now any territorial claims or disputes with Lebanon. Our one and only interest is to guarantee the safety and security of our citizens. I must say that, regrettably, the Government of Lebanon has for many years failed to enforce its sovereignty in the southern part of Lebanon and to disarm Hezbollah. I hope that this situation will improve and that Israel, within the framework of an agreement, will be able to leave the southern part of Lebanon.

Nevertheless, with that as our ambition, I wish to emphasize that we will not be held hostage much longer on this track to a stubborn and defiant attitude. We will make our own independent decisions, as we see fit, in order to ensure our protection and our vital interests, taking all options under consideration.

A reconciliation between Israel and its neighbours must extend the promise that all the peoples of the region may reap the benefits of peace. Normalization must not be viewed as a one-sided gesture. As a natural outcome of peaceful coexistence, normalization is not in the service of one particular party. It is in the interests of all the nations of the region.

We hope to renew the multilateral tracks as early as this year. There is a need for close cooperation in regional multilateral projects. Our region has tremendous

potential. In order to fully realize this potential, we must establish a mechanism of true cooperation among the States of the region. This cooperation would clearly be to the benefit of all of us in the region.

The scarcity of water in our region, which will only get worse, may impose a new way of life on the inhabitants of the Middle East in the coming years. Israel is anticipating this problem and preparing for it, but in this case, as in others, cooperation in the region is essential and will benefit all sides.

The working groups of the multilateral tracks undertook various assignments of primary importance. Unfortunately, their activities have been frozen for irrelevant reasons. This is the time to resurrect them. Any delay or imposed condition is liable to undermine the peace process and delay the aid packages so essential to the peoples of the region. Throughout this important process, on the bilateral and the multilateral tracks alike, we are accompanied by the international community. First and foremost was the United States of America, along with the Russian Federation, the European Union, Canada, Norway, Japan, China and other countries and organizations that have assisted and continue to do so. Their key contributions earn them special commendation from this rostrum.

Egypt and Jordan were our first partners in breaking down the walls of enmity and in thawing relations in our region. Improving our relations with Egypt, as well as renewing the multilateral tracks, are essential to furthering the common objectives of the nations in our region. The relations between Israel and Jordan are an example of appropriate and favourable relations between neighbouring countries. We intend to strengthen and broaden the relations between the two nations in the economic, social and political realms.

As we march further along the difficult path of making peace, we look back with sorrow and sadness as we remember the pioneers who broke new ground and are no longer with us today: the late Menachem Begin, Anwar Saddat, Yitzhak Rabin, King Hussein and King Hassan II of Morocco. Their vision and their work inspire us to continue to work towards completing their enterprise of peacemaking.

We cannot afford to be disillusioned. Our region is neither North America nor Benelux. Even as we negotiate the peace process, we remain aware of the threats and dangers directed against us, threatening the stability of the entire region. The mix of extreme fundamentalism, on the one hand, and of the potential use of weapons of mass destruction, on the other, threatens the peace, stability and future of the entire region. This threat is not just an element of academic debates in the study of international relations, but a harsh reality which we must all face.

From this international platform, I call for a halt to all technological, scientific and other kinds of assistance to countries looking to obtain unconventional weapons, while threatening the existence of the State of Israel and the region as a whole.

The Persian Gulf War demonstrated that leadership lacking reason and stability poses a threat to all the countries in the region and to the world at large. The monitoring groups and machinery in Iraq must be immediately resumed. That is the obligation of the international community so long as the Iraqi regime seeks non-conventional weapons and threatens the region. The United Nations is the largest, most authoritative and most recognized international body. It should therefore be the one to take the initiative and the responsibility in curbing this danger.

Terrorism is an additional strategic enemy and we cannot come to terms with its existence. It is a threat not only to Israel, but to many other nations across the world as well. Terror knows no borders or civilized rules. There can be no coexistence with terror, either in the context of the negotiations conducted by Israel with its neighbours, or in the broader regional context. Anyone who believes that terror is a nuisance which can be tolerated is mistaken. Terror is in essence a strategic threat. A synthesized, coordinated and unrelenting approach must be adopted against it.

Here, in this building of stone and glass, reflecting the current image of our world today with its points of light and shadows of darkness, counterparts and enemies meet as friends and allies in the creation of a forum for discussion and coexistence. Discussion is the way to resolve conflict. It is also the way of tomorrow. Dialogue and common language are the tools of diplomacy, the raw material for the creation of a new reality and the foundation for a stable and safer society.

It was here in the General Assembly, at the beginning of the decade, that I first met with my Chinese counterpart. After 40 years of total dissociation between our two countries, we endeavoured to re-establish

diplomatic relations between Israel and China. It was also here that we laid the groundwork for establishing ties with the former Soviet Union, as well as with India, Nigeria and other States. These are only a few examples demonstrating the possibility in this arena for building a bridge between nations and States.

As a nation that experienced great difficulties, overcome only by accelerated development efforts, the State of Israel takes part in the international effort to aid others and share knowledge, experience and technology, experience which it has accumulated in various fields. The nation of Israel is proud of its ancient tradition of sharing and identifying with the world at large.

Through the Division for International Cooperation within the Israeli Foreign Ministry, Israel maintains ongoing projects and a broad range of training courses in Israel. We have demonstration units and we are conducting research. For example, a special medical centre was recently established in Mauritania and serves the many citizens of that State who suffer from chronic eye problems. Similarly, Israel invests great efforts and resources in training professionals to acquire the skills and abilities necessary for meeting the various challenges that engage many parts of the world.

In the more than 40 years since its inception, the Division for International Cooperation has trained more than 70,000 trainees from more than 120 countries, who have come to Israel and attended its training courses in the areas of agriculture, water resources, health and medicine, science, education and others.

In 1998 alone, some 155 courses were held in Israel on a variety of topics, with the participation of more than 4,000 trainees. Gladly, I can report that many of the trainees were from Middle Eastern countries. Fully 820 Palestinians participated in these courses over the past year, thereby helping to strengthen the bridges of peace which have been built between Israelis and Palestinians. In the same year, Israel ran more than 150 courses in over 60 different countries, with the participation of over 7,000 trainees. I am proud to point out that in many of the countries to which we sent Israeli experts, the local personnel managed to translate our goodwill into positive results on the ground, to the benefit of their people and their land.

Because of the reputation it has acquired, the Division for International Cooperation is also one of the central addresses in Israel to which people can turn in times of disaster around the world. We have recently witnessed just how essential such assistance can be in times of natural disasters. Israel has always responded favourably to requests for aid and relief, regardless of the political context or the state of diplomatic relations.

We wish to support and commend the United States of America, our friend and ally, an inspiration to us all in its efforts to promote the values of cooperation among nations. This is also the time to express our appreciation to the United States for its intensive efforts to bring true peace to the Middle East.

Even today in the United States we have witnessed again a new resort to the threat of boycott. The case at hand is the threat to declare a boycott against the American company Disney, because the company dared to allow Jerusalem to be portrayed in an exhibition celebrating the millennium. We condemn these threats and the use by certain Arab States of this anachronistic device. It has no place here or anywhere else in the world.

Over thousands of years, since the time of biblical King David, the builder of Jerusalem until the present day, Jerusalem has not served as the capital of any other nation in the world besides the nation of Israel, the Jewish people. Even after our forced exile from the land of Israel, we continued, generation after generation, to stay faithful to Jerusalem. The flame of Jerusalem was carried in our hearts as a hidden source of faith and hope.

In our wanderings, in the East and in the West, in the African deserts and on the outskirts of Siberia, from the golden age of Spain through the dark Inquisition, during the prosperous Europe of the romantic era to the charred ashes of the Holocaust, throughout all the above the eyes of the Jews and their prayers have been directed toward Jerusalem. Year after year, from father to son, the anthem of the Jewish nation has constantly been "Next Year in Jerusalem".

With the passing of those previous generations and exiles, we have had the privilege of being deemed worthy to return to Jerusalem, to rebuild the ruins, to rededicate the city as a centre radiating with beauty, open to all followers of all religions, as the poet has said, where freedom of all religions is a fact of life.

It is so upsetting then that even today, 51 years since the independence of the State of Israel, there are

still those who would deny our natural right to decide the location of our capital, a natural right given to every nation in the world. From Jerusalem, the city of David, I will quote from the original song of David on Jerusalem, in words which transcends the limits of time and retains their meaning in every generation:

> "Our feet shall stand within thy gates, oh Jerusalem. Jerusalem is built as a city that is bound firmly together." *(The Holy Bible, Psalm 122:2-3)*

Today, as before, from this podium we declare to the entire world, to our friends and people and those who are distant from us: Jerusalem, unified under Israeli sovereignty, is and will remain forever the capital of Israel.

The President: I call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bahrain, His Excellency Shaikh Mohammed Bin Mubarak Al-Khalifa.

Mr. Al-Khalifa (Bahrain):*(spoke in Arabic)*: Mr. President, I have the pleasure of congratulating you on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. Confident that your experience and ability will strongly influence the successful outcome of the proceedings of this session, I assure you of my delegation's readiness to cooperate with you in fulfilling your task.

I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to express my thanks to His Excellency Didier Opertti Badán, President of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session, for his contribution to the achievements and success of that session. It is also my pleasure to express appreciation for the efforts that Secretary-General Kofi Annan has exerted in order to enable the Organization to fulfil its role in promoting international peace and security and in furthering international cooperation. I also extend the sincere congratulations of the State of Bahrain to the Kingdom of Tonga, the Republic of Nauru and the Republic of Kiribati upon their admission to the United Nations.

On 6 March 1999, the State of Bahrain announced to the people of Bahrain and to the world the sad news of the passing away of His Highness Shaikh 'Isa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa, may God grant him peace and mercy. He was a great and humane emir who loved people and was loved by the people by virtue of the remarkable traits he exhibited, which are the embodiment of the Bahraini character: loyalty, tolerance and civility. He, may God bestow His mercy upon him, championed national independence, the Constitution, the consultative process and the erection of the State institutions and the rule of law. He championed development, comprehensive renaissance and diversification of the national economy. He championed Gulf cooperation and Arab solidarity through the most difficult times and situations. He championed peace and international cooperation and genuine friendship among all peoples.

These causes were the legacy of the late emir, whose approach will continue to be the beacon that guides Bahrain as it moves forward along its national path and as it pursues Gulf cooperation, Arab solidarity, regional cooperation with neighbours and international cooperation with one and all.

In view of this session's special momentousness, as it is being held at a juncture between the end of a century and the beginning of a new millennium, it behoves us to pause and reflect on the experience of the United Nations over the last half century. It should again be emphasized that, as we approach the third millennium, we ought to direct our actions in consonance with the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter, which are aimed at enhancing peace and economic and social development, in the interest of the world as a whole and on the basis of equality, justice and respect for law.

The Organization's experience of more than 50 years, with all its successes and setbacks in dealing with crises and in addressing the challenges facing the world, has demonstrated that the benefits of past experience should be taken into account as we prepare for the future. In this way we would be better equipped to contribute to the building of a new world and a brighter future and would be better committed to the United Nations. Some of that experience has proved that departure from the United Nations principles, Charter and resolutions has strained relations among many States and caused regional disputes and ethnic conflicts that have threatened security and stability in numerous regions of the world. Yet humanity has accomplished much during the last half century, particularly through United Nations involvement in the maintenance of international peace and security, sustainable development and international cooperation. Such United Nations endeavours deserve our appreciation and commitment so that we can alleviate the human suffering of those who are beset by poverty and lack of security, stability and the basic requirements of a life of dignity.

Hence, our common agreement on enhancing the vitally important role of the United Nations during the forthcoming millennium as the embodiment of the international community's conscience and its hope of building a better world in which our common human aspirations, as enshrined in the Charter, can be realized.

Bahrain's experience on the Security Council during the past two years has demonstrated that small countries are capable of effectively contributing to the causes of international peace and security. That experience has also reaffirmed Bahrain's convictions, most notably its adherence to the principles of the United Nations Charter and international legality, which reflect the will and desire of the international community to live in security, tolerance and peace. It has also confirmed the importance of strengthening the principles of equitable geographic representation and transparency as important values and principles in international relations. Such principles would enhance the Security Council's role in maintaining peace and security and help develop its ability to function effectively. Therefore, it is essential that efforts be exerted to reform the Council so that it can adequately reflect political realities and cope with the changing international climate during the next century.

The role of the Security Council in dealing with the questions of peace and security requires that the processes of peacekeeping and peace-building be interrelated in order to prevent the renewal of conflicts; hence Bahrain's request for the convening of an open meeting during its term as President of the Council last December, to consider the relationship between peacekeeping and peace-building. The extensive participation of members of the Council and other Members of the United Nations bears witness to the conviction of many Member States that such linkage is essential for the integration of political action with action in the field of economic and social development.

Bahrain's enthusiasm and interest in taking part in joint efforts to reach solutions for issues of peace and security have been demonstrated by its active and constructive participation whenever the Security Council has dealt with such questions. By virtue of the expertise that it has gained, Bahrain will be active, both within its region and at the international level, in furthering the principles of security, peace and stability.

Since the beginning of Bahrain's modern revival, our country has been building a modern State and a developed civil society on the basis of developing, preparing and qualifying the individual to deal with the demands of our time and to participate positively in present and future transformation. As a result, Bahrain has been able to build an open and developed economy that has made it possible for the country to realize comprehensive and sustainable human development, as reflected in its remarkable ranking in the human development index for five consecutive years. This is also reflected in the reports of the United Nations Development Programme, whose contributions and efforts in the field of development in many States we commend.

The State of Bahrain has long been aware of the importance of human development and has thus drawn up plans and policies for the development and utilization of the capabilities of Bahrainis in all fields. It has also enacted legislation encouraging women to join the workforce and to enter the labour market. Thus, the percentage of Bahraini women in the entire public sector labour force reached 33.5 per cent in 1998, and the total number of women in the private sector labour force has reached 20 per cent. The State of Bahrain takes pride in this achievement at the regional and international levels. It makes available equal opportunities to both men and women in the fields, *inter alia*, of education, health care and social welfare, as these are basic priorities of human rights for which Bahrain's efforts have been applauded by United Nations human rights bodies and experts.

In its new era under the leadership of its emir, His Highness Shaikh Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa, Bahrain will continue on its course, which has allowed it to assume a prominent place economically and socially, thereby becoming an example of progressive development that takes into account both the global dimension and the preservation of its heritage and traditions.

Over the last two decades, the Gulf region has witnessed serious and painful events, the ramifications of which continue to pose a threat to the security and stability of this vital region, which is an important hub for world trade and for mutual, beneficial exchange between various nations of the world.

Those events have demonstrated that the maintenance and preservation of regional security can be based only on respect for and strict observation of principles that the State of Bahrain has always advocated, most notably respect for the status quo and the inviolability of established boundaries. Relations among countries of the region should be based on the principles of good neighbourliness, mutual respect and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States.

Recognition of each State's national sovereignty is an essential factor for the preservation of security and stability in the region, as is the settlement of disputes by peaceful means acceptable to the States concerned.

Accordingly, and reaffirming its consistent position with respect to a number of regional and international questions and its keen interest in the maintenance of security and peace in the world, particularly in the Gulf region, Bahrain again calls on Iraq to implement relevant Security Council resolutions, especially those relating to weapons of mass destruction and the release of prisoners of war and detainees of Kuwaiti and other nationalities.

At the same time, Bahrain urges anew that efforts be continued with a view to alleviating the suffering of the brotherly Iraqi people resulting from sanctions. It is also eager to ensure the independence, unity and territorial integrity of Iraq and opposes any interference in its internal affairs.

In the interest of security, stability and peace in the Gulf region, Bahrain wishes to emphasize again its support for all efforts aimed at settling by peaceful means the dispute between the United Arab Emirates and the Islamic Republic of Iran over the three islands, namely Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb, all of which belong to the United Arab Emirates. In this respect, Bahrain wishes success to the work of the Tripartite Ministerial Committee formed by the Gulf Cooperation Council to solve the dispute in a manner that would lead to the establishment of good and normal relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran on the basis of the principles of good neighbourliness, mutual respect and observance of mutual interests.

In conjunction with the questions of security and stability, it is imperative that we re-emphasize the danger of territorial claims aimed at changing established, inherited and traditionally accepted boundaries. Bahrain therefore welcomes the resolutions adopted by the summit of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) held in Algeria in July 1999 which confirmed the adherence of member States to the principles set out in the OAU Charter and OAU resolutions in respect of inherited and traditionally accepted boundaries.

During the last three years, the Middle East peace process has encountered a setback which froze and almost completely destroyed the process, owing to the rigid positions and contradictory policies of the previous Israeli Government. Now that a new Government has taken over and has made promises regarding its readiness to revive the peace process, Bahrain, having endorsed that process from the very beginning and having consistently worked towards its success, expresses its hope that the new Israeli Government will translate its promises into full, complete and faithful implementation of all the agreements reached and will be responsive to international efforts to make the peace process a success.

Accordingly, the State of Bahrain has welcomed the latest Palestinian-Israeli agreement on the implementation of the Wye River accords signed at Sharm el-Sheikh as a positive step towards a final settlement between the two parties and the enhancement of the peace process among all other parties.

The Arab side has repeatedly confirmed its commitment to the peace terms reflected in the principles of the 1991 Madrid Conference and the relevant United Nations resolutions. It believes that achievement of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region should be the strategic option that would obligate Israel to recognize legitimate Arab rights, to comply with the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy, including Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), to respect the right of the Palestinian people to have their own independent State with Jerusalem as its capital, to fully withdraw from all occupied Arab territories, including the Syrian Arab Golan Heights, to the boundaries that existed on 4 June 1967 and to withdraw from Lebanese territory pursuant to Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

The success of the peace process and the achievement of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace will undoubtedly have a bearing on the future stability and development of all the countries and peoples of the region.

At the same time, we wish to stress the importance of intensifying efforts to make the Middle East, including the Gulf region, a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons.

The world has witnessed this year positive developments in respect of an issue that was a source of deep concern to the international Organization and the international community, namely the question of Lockerbie. We should like here to commend the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya for complying with relevant Security Council resolutions, as well as the other parties in the case for the cooperation they have displayed. We also welcome the suspension by the Security Council of

sanctions against Libya and express our appreciation of efforts exerted by the Governments of the brotherly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and South Africa and by the Secretary-General, as well as the concerned regional organizations, which have led to agreement on the case. We hope that this will lead to the complete lifting of sanctions.

The easing of the Kosovo crisis by virtue of the return of refugees and displaced persons to their homes and villages has imbued the international community with hope and satisfaction. However, the whole world has seen shocking images of the crimes of ethnic cleansing and the terrorizing of innocent people and of the human suffering that has beset the people of Kosovo, including the displacement of about one million Kosovars, mass graves and the destruction of villages and homes. It is incumbent upon the international community to unfailingly guard against and to address the causes of the phenomenon of racism and all its manifestations.

In view of its keen interest in the maintenance of international peace and security, the State of Bahrain calls upon the United Nations and the international community quickly to intensify their efforts, in cooperation with the competent regional organizations, to settle the ongoing conflicts in various regions and among a number of States. These include the tense situation between Ethiopia and Eritrea and internal strife in Afghanistan, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, East Timor and other parts of the world.

Other sources of concern are the phenomena of terrorism, violence, organized crime and related activities such as transnational drug and weapons trafficking that continue to pose a threat to all societies. To address these problems the State of Bahrain supports the call by the Arab Republic of Egypt for the convening of an international conference, under the auspices of the United Nations, with a view to drawing up a comprehensive strategy to combat and eliminate these phenomena.

Since the end of the Second World War, the world economy has experienced tremendous changes on the international trade landscape, including the emergence of giant trade conglomerates and a revolution in the fields of technology, information and communications.

About half a century after the establishment of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the international community was able to establish the World Trade Organization (WTO) in order to undertake the responsibility of establishing frameworks for world trade in the forthcoming decades. Now, with the advent of the twenty-first century and the rise of economic globalization, the international community has to set ambitious goals, most notable of which are the eradication of poverty and the pursuit of economic and social development.

Although the positive and constructive position taken recently by the Group of Eight regarding the settlement of the problems of indebtedness has created an atmosphere of confidence and satisfaction, two important points should be stressed. First, the burden of repaying the remaining balances and the servicing of debts should not interrupt the growth and integration of the national economies concerned into the world economy. Secondly, it is essential to create a favourable environment for the promotion of economic and trade cooperation between States on the basis of equality and mutual benefit and within a framework of transparency of capital markets, in addition to facilitating the transfer of technology and encouraging international investment, which would enhance development and growth for all, as well as facilitating the equitable integration of the economies of developing countries into the world economic system. This will enable the world economy to avoid any other shocks that are liable to have a universal impact.

The State of Bahrain is pleased and willing to contribute to international efforts aimed at achieving increased international economic cooperation, due to its stability and strategic location, and the trade and investment environment it enjoys — elements that have helped it attract foreign capital and enhance its standing as an advanced financial and commercial centre.

With the imminent approach of a new century, the world has witnessed major historical changes precipitated by technological and scientific advances, a telecommunications revolution, a rapid flow of information, a trend towards open global markets and a widening scope of interaction between nations, cultures and civilizations. All this serves as a harbinger signalling the advent of a better world for humanity as a whole. Yet, while we appreciate the positive aspects of such advance, we are duty-bound to warn against the dangers that accompany those positive aspects. Those dangers raise the following questions.

To what extent can poor countries benefit from the technological revolution? If they cannot, then the

revolution will serve only to widen the gap between the poor and the rich. To what extent can scientific advance and globalization solve the various environmental problems that endanger the entire world, if such a solution is not linked to solving the problems of development in poor countries, on the one hand, and to curbing and rationalizing consumer and welfare trends in rich countries, on the other? To what extent can globalization of capital flows and markets facilitate the flow of investments into developing countries and boost their export capacities in a manner that would enhance the development of their economies and their contributions to the world economy? To what extent can the potential of such advance and globalization be utilized to help prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, address ethnic conflicts, settle disputes and eliminate the threat of international terrorism? To what extent can this advance and globalization be utilized to enhance opportunities for improving the quality of education, culture and worldwide intercultural knowledge, with a view to upholding the ideals of peace, equality and brotherhood among the entire human race?

With the advent of the third millennium, it behoves us to consider and reflect upon the accomplishments of humanity, on the one hand, and the horrible human suffering that has beset thousands of individuals as a consequence of disputes, conflicts and poverty, on the other. We believe that the United Nations is the principal forum for such reflection and consideration so that solutions can be found for these disputes and conflicts. It is Bahrain's conviction, in this connection, that the international community can enhance its standing and its values during the next millennium and ensure a better destiny for itself, through the achievement of peace, security, solidarity and cooperation within a framework of universal human partnership and pluralism. Bahrain regards these elements as essential for the survival of the planet and calls for strengthening the role of the United Nations system, as it is the trustworthy custodian of our accomplishments and aspirations, so that it can carry out its task to the fullest extent. We are confident that mankind can reach higher levels of advancement, development and growth through coordination and cooperation within the United Nations and other regional organizations. It is our hope that the new millennium will usher in a new era of abundance wherein the world will be endowed with security, peace and stability.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Chad, His Excellency Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif.

Mr. Annadif (Chad) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Chad delegation, and on my own behalf, I would like to extend warm congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. This is both a tribute to your country, Namibia, for its contribution in defending the ideals of our Organization and a recognition of your considerable ability. The delegation of Chad is firmly convinced that your experience, talents and wisdom will contribute to the success of our deliberations. We assure you of our full support and cooperation in the accomplishment of your noble mission.

I would also like to express our gratitude to your predecessor, Mr. Didier Opertti of Uruguay, who tactfully and adroitly led the work of the fifty-third session.

Allow me also to praise the merits of our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the foresight, wisdom and, above all, patience with which he is guiding the Organization, as well as for his sustained efforts in seeking international peace and security, despite all kinds of difficulties and the immensity of his tasks.

In a few months we will enter the third millennium, a millennium filled with uncertainties, fears and unknowns, but also one of hope. That millennium will be characterized by globalization and, above all, the domination of human intelligence over nature. It will be an era of communications in which our planet will shrink to a tiny area. It will also mean the disappearance of barriers to the circulation of ideas, knowledge, culture and science. But it will also be an era of competition and complementarity.

During this century, the aspirations of most peoples was to be fed, clothed, cared for, educated, trained, housed and gainfully employed. It is legitimate to hope that with the arrival of the coming century these essential, basic human needs will be met, so that we can avoid a further widening of the gap between wealthy and poor countries.

On the eve of the third millennium, we must acknowledge that the lofty objectives of the United Nations, primarily the maintenance of international peace and security and the reduction of poverty among Member States, are far from being attained, although we have been focusing on them for half a century.

How can we not ask ourselves these kinds of questions at this great annual gathering, where the scope and urgency of political and economic problems are made so clear? It is time to contemplate solutions that include new kinds of relationships, based on solidarity and partnership, that go beyond the traditional relations of cooperation, which have proved their limitations.

Turning more specifically to Chad, our major concern is to create conditions of peace and security through a fully participatory political process that involves the various political parties in the management of public affairs and in the national reconciliation policy for all the people of Chad. The involvement in this approach of all segments of society has enabled our country to restore political stability and civil peace and to establish constitutional and democratic institutions.

We are firmly convinced that a democracy can be effective only when it is based on certain republican concepts, primarily justice, the primacy of human rights and the participation of local communities in the management of their own affairs. The recent establishment of the Supreme Court and the Constitutional Council speak to this major concern, as does that of the National Commission on Human Rights, in operation since 1994. These efforts were acknowledged and led the United Nations Commission on Human Rights last April to end its consideration of the human rights situation in Chad and consequently remove our country from the confidential procedural situation it had been in since March 1991.

Finally, our Government has undertaken a decentralization policy aimed at implementing the choice made by the people of Chad, as reflected in the Constitution of 11 April 1996, through the establishment of decentralized territorial communities and the gradual transfer of authority.

In an effort to consolidate peace and reinforce social cohesion, the Government of Chad has focused on two questions: the army and anti-personnel mines. With respect to the thorny problems relating to the army and security, our Government has undertaken to ensure professional training for demobilized former combatants in order to redeploy them to new jobs, to provide them support in developing income-generating skills and to see to it that their basic needs are met.

With respect to security issues, we have set up a demining programme that should contribute to increasing the safety of the national territory, where approximately a million mines and an indeterminate amount of ammunition of all calibres remain buried, thereby helping to open up Chad, especially the northern part of the country. The presence of these dangerous devices seriously impedes the movement of goods and people and hence the development of the regions concerned.

In this regard, my country has signed and ratified the Ottawa Convention and has set up national structures supervised by the National High Commissioner for Demining in order effectively to combat these lethal devices. The objectives of that programme focus, *inter alia*, on reducing the number of victims, making the main roads safer, promoting economic and social development and facilitating the return of displaced persons.

The implementation of this ambitious demining programme, whose dimensions extend beyond the borders of our country, cannot be done without the assistance of our partners and friends. That is why we wish to appeal once again from this lofty rostrum to the solidarity of Member States of our Organization and to ask them to provide us with assistance and cooperation.

On the eve of the twenty-first century, the welfare of the country's citizens remains the motivating force for governmental action in Chad. That action is based on the ambitious reforms undertaken since 1995 and focuses primarily on a modern and dynamic economy. In point of fact, following devaluation in 1994, Chad rejoined the Bretton Woods institutions and on 23 April 1995 adopted a structural adjustment programme for the medium term with resources provided by the International Monetary Fund in the framework of its Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility and by the World Bank in terms of structural-adjustment credit, and with financial assistance from our usual partners — France, the European Union and the African Development Bank. Bold reforms have been undertaken that focus primarily on stabilizing public finance, correcting external imbalances and ensuring sustainable growth. To this end we instituted an effective policy to combat poverty.

Our Government has drafted and adopted a new sustainable development programme focusing on three major challenges: economic and financial, social, and political and institutional. The goal is to create a climate of social stability through sustained structural reform and through fiscal, monetary and budgetary policies that will contribute to a macro-economic consolidation and to controlling inflation.

This fight against poverty focuses on four strategic priority elements in the areas of health, education, infrastructure and rural development. In this undertaking we have received support from the international community at the fourth round table on Chad, held in Geneva on 21 and 22 October 1998, where some $1.12 billion was pledged.

In this regard, I wish to express our deepest gratitude to friendly countries and international financial organizations and institutions for their strong response to our appeal for international solidarity. The people of Chad will never forget those commendable efforts. Following that round table, we organized two sectoral meetings, on health and on rural development. Meetings on infrastructure and education will take place in the near future. We reiterate our appeal to all interested parties to participate actively in these meetings, which will be held in N'Djamena in November and December 1999, respectively.

One cannot speak of Chad's economy today without referring to the question of the exploitation of its oil resources. This is a key political, diplomatic and socio-economic issue that has fueled heated discussions both inside and outside the country. In addition to its undeniable economic importance, this project will contribute significantly to subregional integration because it establishes a partnership between two brotherly countries, namely Cameroon and Chad.

In this respect, we have taken into account the development difficulties that Chad is facing, and we are considering our future in terms of petroleum-related issues with a great deal of caution. The Government and the Parliament of Chad have already set up management and distribution mechanisms for the anticipated oil income. For the first time ever in the history of the exploitation of oil deposits, legislation has been enacted to guarantee transparency in the management of oil revenue and also to set aside some of that income for territorial communities in the oil-producing regions and for future generations. The oil activity is an exceptional opportunity, which should contribute to the gradual rebalancing of our budget and give us room for manoeuvre to establish a true policy for development. This project has rightly raised hopes throughout the country.

We are all firmly convinced that new efforts and many sacrifices are required to ensure the gradual implementation of the purposes and principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter as they relate to disputes between a considerable number of Member States as well as to other equally challenging evils that continue to trouble the human conscience. How can we remain indifferent when confronted with the scourges of poverty, illiteracy, foreign aggression, conflict, various pandemics and transnational problems associated with the degradation of the environment and drug trafficking? Unfortunately, these challenges will further increase with globalization, which is now inevitable. Africa is the continent that has been most exposed to those evils, and the growing number of crises is causing our efforts to be spread too thinly and reducing the meagre resources available and dividing our countries.

The interdependence of peace and socio-economic development needs no further proof, especially in Chad, which has experienced the torments of war, its disastrous effects on the population and its repercussions on social and economic life. Out of a sense of duty and international obligation, my country has made and will continue to make enormous sacrifices for other African countries that have fallen victim to the problems inherent in coexistence. That is why we have participated in various peacekeeping operations in the subregion of Central Africa. In this context, I am pleased to recall Operation Turquoise, in which Chad participated to save lives in Rwanda. Chad also contributed to the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements and the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic, which sought a negotiated solution between the Government of the Central African Republic and a part of the rebel army, and which resulted in bringing together different viewpoints opinions and establishing conditions required for the organization of multi-party elections.

In that same spirit, my country intervened in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Our involvement, together with that of other countries, enabled the situation to be stabilized and promoted dialogue between the warring parties. With the signing of the Syrte accords on 18 April 1999, Chad withdrew its troops from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The signing of the Lusaka ceasefire agreement by all the parties in conflict has opened up new prospects for that brotherly people. Chad hopes that that agreement, which the Security Council has endorsed, will lead to a definitive peace in that country and the entire Great Lakes region. Chad will support that process.

The tragedy in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has not made us lose sight of the situation in the

Republic of the Congo, which was recently on the verge of breaking up. Now passion seems to be giving way to reason. We welcome the will shown by both the Government of Congo and the opposition parties, who have taken the wise decision to negotiate to restore peace to their country. Chad welcomes and encourages this positive development.

To this rather sombre picture we must add the fragile situation in Angola, where the civil war has resumed throughout the national territory. This is of great concern for all of Africa, particularly since the resumption of hostilities will undoubtedly mean the failure of the considerable efforts made on all sides to bring peace to that country, which has been ravaged by a long war, thus prolonging the suffering of the Angolan people. We appeal to the Security Council to assist in restoring peace to that wounded country.

We welcome the tireless efforts of the Economic Community of West African States to bring peace and security to West Africa. Those efforts have led to the signing of the ceasefire agreements in Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau. All the parties involved in those crises should show restraint and work towards reconciliation in the higher interests of their peoples.

With regard to the Horn of Africa, we note that there has been no obvious progress in the willingness of the parties involved in the conflict in Somalia to find a political solution leading to national unity. While we welcome the efforts of Mr. Hosni Mubarak aimed at a negotiated resolution of the crisis, we also appeal to the Somali leaders to assist in restoring peace to their country. We regret the resumption of hostilities between the Ethiopians and Eritreans, which has led to a considerable loss of life and material damage. We urge all those who have mediated between the warring parties to persevere so as to put an end to those hostilities, which have further exacerbated an already disturbing situation.

Closer to home, Chad welcomes the decision of the Security Council to suspend the embargo against the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. We urge that the sanctions be lifted once and for all; they have seriously damaged the interests of the brotherly people of that neighbouring country.

Of all the continents, Africa seems to have suffered the most from the economic crisis and from wars and other conflict situations. But we have not forgotten the major problems that other peoples are facing.

With regard to the situation in the Middle East, it has already been established that the question of Palestine is at the heart of the conflict. Its resolution lies in the implementation of the Oslo accords and, in particular, in full respect by all the parties for United Nations resolutions. The credibility of the Security Council is at stake. With the arrival of a new Israeli Government, there is new hope for the future. Chad encourages all the parties to work together in the same direction.

Elsewhere, the effects of the conflicts between Iraq and Kuwait and between Iraq and Iran persist, hampering the final return to peace. We appeal to the sense of responsibility of the former warring parties to work tirelessly to restore full peace.

In the Balkans, Chad encourages the efforts of the international community to restore peace to the region, and in particular to Kosovo. As for East Timor, we urge all the parties involved to complete the process begun under the auspices of the United Nations so as to end the suffering of the people there.

In Asia, Chad is concerned about the fate of the Republic of China on Taiwan and its 22 million inhabitants. The Republic of China on Taiwan, which plays a major role in world trade, is a peace-loving country that fulfils the obligations in the United Nations Charter, as it has shown on many occasions. Chad supports the admission of the Republic of China on Taiwan to the United Nations as a means of correcting an injustice.

It is well known that a number of conflicts stem from the unbridled arms race. In this regard, the circulation, proliferation of and illicit trafficking in small arms in Africa is of concern to us, particularly since this phenomenon, the result of the end of the cold war and numerous conflicts in the continent, has taken a disturbing turn. If appropriate solutions are not found soon, peace, security and stability in our countries will be constantly threatened.

To address this situation, a conference on small arms and drug trafficking will take place in Chad under the auspices of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa; it will be followed immediately by the twelfth ministerial meeting of that Committee. Those two important meetings will be held at Ndjamena from 25 to 30 October 1999. Chad is honoured to act as host to the Committee

and will do everything in its power to ensure the success of its work.

The United Nations was founded in a historical context with which we are all familiar. It has been and remains a place for bringing people and ideas closer together, and its very existence has helped avert more than one catastrophe. But the international political and economic environment has changed, and the great rivalry of the cold war has disappeared, giving way to an international system that is still finding itself. We now see an increased desire by Member States to participate in the management of international affairs in addition to the management of their own. United Nations structures must therefore be adapted to the new scope of today's problems, which requires an equal sharing of international responsibilities; these must no longer be the monopoly of a few States, however powerful they may be.

To respond to these concerns, the Security Council must be reformed. Here, Chad wholeheartedly supports the position of the Organization of African Unity that, *inter alia*, there must be equitable and legitimate representation on the Security Council for the African continent.

With respect to the global economy and world trade, appropriate steps must be taken to ensure that the all States will share equally in the benefits of globalization. Globalization of the economy certainly can have the advantage of eliminating all discriminatory and unfair practices in world trade, but it must be recognized that the lack of competitive power of the economies of the countries of the South does not enable them to benefit fully from this. Moreover, the unbridled liberalization of markets and the lack of measures to consolidate certain gains are weakening their economies and marginalizing them in the world arena.

Similarly, the indebtedness of those countries places a heavy burden on their meagre budgetary resources, and wipes out all their development efforts. I welcome the recent decision taken by the Group of Seven at its summit held at Cologne, Germany, to ease the debt of heavily indebted poor countries. Such initiatives are praiseworthy, but they remain insufficient. Chad urges the wealthy countries to make a greater effort to enable poor countries finally to address the external-debt burden, which is a true obstacle to economic and social development.

The President: I call next on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bhutan, His Excellency Mr. Jigmi Yoser Thinley.

Mr. Thinley (Bhutan): Allow me to congratulate you most warmly, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. My delegation is confident that with your vast experience you will steer us through the daunting array of issues before us with great skill. I assure you of the full cooperation and support of my delegation.

May I take this opportunity to express our gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Didier Opertti for his leadership and for his contribution to the work of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly.

My delegation takes great pleasure in welcoming the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga as they assume their rightful positions in the comity of nations. It is appropriate that, at this final session of the General Assembly of the twentieth century, the United Nations family has been expanded by yet another three Members. We look forward to the valuable contributions they will make to the Organization, and to working closely with them on issues of mutual concern.

This century has witnessed perhaps the greatest changes in the annals of civilization, from enormous strides in science and technology to advances in social thought and organization. Yet we continue to witness the worst forms of devastation arising from conflict and from the buildup of destructive capacity. The United Nations was born out of the ashes of the Second World War as a reflection of the desire and aspiration of all people to live in peace and harmony. At this, the last session of the General Assembly before the end of the millennium, it is incumbent upon us to consider whether the United Nations has lived up to the high ideals and expectations of all its Members.

The primary objective and responsibility of the United Nations is the maintenance of global peace and harmony on the basis of international law and the sovereign equality of all nations. Even though the United Nations moved swiftly to assume this important responsibility of maintaining peace and security right from its inception, its effectiveness has not been optimal. The end of the cold war raised new hopes and expectations, and renewed efforts to exercise that responsibility. The task has been complex and difficult, and, sometimes, decisive action on some issues has led us to question why there was inaction on others. In our view, the primary mechanism for the maintenance of peace and security must make use of early dialogue

aimed at peaceful resolution of differences. The use of force to resolve conflict must be considered with extreme caution; it must be fully within the context of international law and must enjoy the support of all the members of the international community.

The United Nations Charter entrusts responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security to the Security Council. While the Council must have the flexibility to act promptly, it, or its individual members, must not operate in isolation. The Council must be responsible to the international community at large and must respond to our collective aspirations for a more representative, relevant and effective Organization.

Bhutan associates itself with the position of the Non-Aligned Movement, which maintains that new global realities must be reflected through reform of the Security Council, in terms of both its composition and its working methods. The legitimacy of an increased role and voice for developing countries must find expression in an increased permanent representation on the Council. We trust that deliberations on this matter will proceed within the established framework of General Assembly mechanisms, with the involvement of all Member States and with continued transparency.

The threat to international peace and security posed by the abundance of weapons of mass destruction as well as conventional arms has not diminished. Progress on nuclear disarmament can take place only if the legitimate security concerns of all countries are addressed and if there is a firm commitment to the eventual elimination of all such weapons. Equal attention, we believe, must be given also to the regulation of global trade in conventional weapons and small arms.

Terrorism continues to jeopardize and undermine human rights, fundamental freedoms and security in a growing number of countries and situations. There is an urgent need to accord greater priority to the elaboration of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism. The global community must enhance cooperation to prevent, combat and eliminate this scourge.

Globalization offers unprecedented opportunities for sustained economic development. Paradoxically, the rapid processes of change and adjustment have been accompanied by intensified poverty, unemployment and social disorientation. Fears that current patterns of market-driven globalization may even give rise to further marginalization of developing countries are not altogether unfounded. All these clearly indicate that there is an acute need for balance in order to forge a middle path for the process of globalization.

My country welcomes the decision taken at the Cologne Summit in June 1999 by the G-8 aimed at alleviating some of the debt burden of the heavily indebted poor countries. We are hopeful that the effective implementation of this decision will go a long way in supporting national efforts to reduce the debt burden of these countries to more serviceable levels and open for them the opportunities for real and sustained economic growth.

While we commend our development partners that have reached or surpassed agreed official development assistance targets, we regret that with a few exceptions, the long-standing commitment to United Nations targets for official development assistance remains largely an unfulfilled goal. In this regard, Bhutan joins other developing countries in underlining the importance of the convening of a high-level conference on the financing of development within the framework of the United Nations. Bhutan recognizes that all parties must exert equal efforts in order to foster a successful development partnership, but it is increasingly concerned by the growing marginalization of least developed countries in global trade, whose share remains below 0.4 per cent. While the least developed countries have taken steps towards economic liberalization and institutional reform, their smooth integration into the global economy must be facilitated through preferential access to markets and assistance for institutional capacity-building and infrastructure development. In this regard, we are heartened by the general sensitivity and responsiveness shown by the World Trade Organization.

As a founding member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) family, Bhutan is committed to further strengthening cooperation in South Asia, where infinitely vast resources and potentials remain locked and unrealized. We have made progress in fostering cooperation, particularly in the social fields, and in strengthening cooperation in the core economic areas. Of special significance is our commitment to establish the necessary mechanisms to enable SAARC to move from a preferential trade arrangement to a free trade arrangement within a reasonable period of time.

One of the overriding responsibilities of the United Nations is in the field of socio-economic development.

Over the decades, the contributions of the various United Nations agencies have been remarkable, although these have sometimes been taken for granted. It is important that we recognize their contributions and provide them with the necessary resources to effectively continue their support to developing countries.

Bhutan has always pursued a people-centred development process. Our national development strategies have always aimed at enhancing gross national happiness rather than merely increasing gross national product. This concept calls not only for economic development in the conventional sense, but for enriching the lives of the people in a holistic way, through the preservation and promotion of our rich cultural heritage, through the protection and conservation of our fragile mountain ecosystem and through the strengthening and exercise of good governance.

In pursuit of an equitable balance between material and spiritual development, the Government has consistently allocated a large share of resources over the last four decades for social services. Almost 30 per cent of the present national budget is allocated to the provision of free basic education and primary health care. To these are attributable a substantial jump in our literacy rate – and the advance in enrolment rate – and an increase in life expectancy for the average Bhutanese by 20 years in two decades.

We have realized that balanced development is not always the easiest route to take. It entails considerable contemplation, a cautious approach and a deliberate choice of a measured path. It requires patience, restraint and; indeed, courage: patience to persevere over many years in order to reap long-term benefits, restraint and self-control to refrain from fleeting compulsions and courage to sacrifice immediate gains in favour of long-term sustainable development.

I would like to seize this opportunity to thank the many worthy members of this Assembly and the various United Nations and other multilateral agencies for their inspiration, cooperation and meaningful support in my country's endeavour to ensure progress and sustained gross national happiness.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.